WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. In a therapy for inhibiting incontinence by effecting a desired contraction of a discrete target region within an endopelvic support tissue, a method comprising:

engaging a surface of a probe against the discrete target region of the endopelvic support tissue;

directing energy from an array of transmission elements disposed on the probe surface into the support tissue so as to effect the desired contraction of the target region, wherein the energy directing step is performed without moving the probe.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the energy directing step comprises transmitting the energy across a probe surface/tissue interface having a length of at least 10 mm and a width of at least 5 mm, the energy being sufficient to contract the endopelvic support tissue without ablating the endopelvic support tissue.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the engaging step comprises engaging a curving surface of the probe against an endopelvic facia, the curving surface being at least semi-rigid.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the engaging step further comprises flexing the curving surface of the probe against the target region so that each element of the array is electrically coupled with the endopelvic facia, the elements comprising electrodes.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein the flexing step comprises pushing manually against a thin flat probe body.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the array comprises a two-dimensional array of electrode pairs, and wherein the directing energy step comprises applying bipolar electrical energy between the electrodes of each pair.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the array comprises a two-

dimensional array of electrodes, and wherein the directing energy step comprises applying bipolar electrical energy between pairs of the electrodes, wherein at least one electrode of the array is disposed between at least one of the pairs.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising controlling the energy directing step to so that the support tissue is heated to a temperature in a range from about 70E C to about 140E C.

7 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the limiting step comprises varying a distribution of electrical power to the electrodes of the array.

10. In a therapy for incontinence by effecting a desired contraction of an endopelvic fascia, the endopelvic fascia composed of a left portion and a right portion, a method comprising:

accessing a first target region along the left or right portion of the endopelvic fascia, the first target region being offset laterally from the urethra;

positioning a probe surface against the first target region;

directing energy from the positioned probe surface into the first target region so as to effect the desired contraction of the left or right portion of the endopelvic fascia without moving the positioned probe surface.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the first target region is disposed along the left portion of the endopelvic fascia, and further comprising accessing a second target region along the right portion of the endopelvic fascia, the second region being offset laterally from the urethra so that the urethra is disposed between, and separated from, the first and second target regions; and directing energy from a probe surface into the second region so as to effect the desired contraction of the other portion without moving the probe surface.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the first and second energy directing steps are performed so as to effect sufficient contraction of the endopelvic fascia to inhibit incontinence.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the first and second energy directing steps are performed simultaneously.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the first and second energy directing steps are performed sequentially with a single surface of the probe.

15. The method of claim 10, wherein the positioning step comprises aligning a protective zone of the probe surface with the urethra by receiving the urethra in an indentation of the probe surface.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the aligning step comprises introducing a catheter into the urethra to expand the urethra.

17. The method of claim 10, wherein the positioning step comprises inserting a probe while the probe is in a narrow configuration, and mechanically expanding the inserted probe to an enlarged configuration to urge the probe surface against the first target region.

18. A method for selectively contracting a target tissue, the method comprising:

aligning a treatment surface of a probe with a first portion of the target tissue, the treatment surface having a peripheral portion and an interior portion;

directing energy from the treatment surface into the first portion of target tissue so as to contract the first portion, wherein contraction of the first portion draws a second portion of the target tissue into alignment with the peripheral portion of the treatment surface;

selectively directing energy from the peripheral portion of the treatment surface into the second portion of the target tissue.

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19. A device for effecting a desired contraction of a discrete target region of a tissue, the target region having a target region size and shape, the device comprising:

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a probe having a treatment surface, the treatment surface size and shape corresponding to the size and shape of the target region;

at least one element disposed along the treatment surface for transmitting energy from the treatment surface to the target region without moving the probe such that the energy effects the desired contraction.

5601

20. The device of claim 19, wherein the at least one element comprises a plurality of electrodes distributed across the treatment surface of the probe so as to define an array.

21. The device of claim 20, further comprising a power source coupled to the electrodes of the array via circuitry that delivers sufficient electrical power through the electrodes to the target tissue to effect the desired contraction of the target region without charring and without ablating the tissue.

Sub A2

22. The device of claim 20, further comprising a thin flat probe body defining the treatment surface, wherein the treatment surface is at least semi-rigid.

23. The device of claim 20, wherein the probe body has an expansion member for urging the electrodes against the target tissue.

5601

24. The device of claim 19, wherein the at least one element comprises a conduit for a hot fluid.

25. The device of claim 19, wherein the treatment surface has a length in a range from about 10 mm to about 50 mm and a width in a range from about 5 mm to about 30 mm.

26. The device of claim 19, further comprising an energy source coupled to the element so as to deliver the energy to the element with minimal collateral damage to the target tissue.

27. The device of claim 26, wherein the at least one element defines a central treatment area and a peripheral treatment area, and wherein the energy source independently energizes the peripheral area to contract tissues brought into contact with the treatment surface from previous tissue contraction.

28. A device for effecting contraction of a target fascial tissue, the target tissue having a fascial surface, the device comprising:

a probe body having a treatment surface, the treatment surface being oriented for engaging the fascial surface, the probe body being at least semi-rigid and having a length of at least about 10 mm and a width of at least about 5 mm;

an array of electrodes distributed over the treatment surface for transmitting energy into the engaged target tissue without moving the probe such that the energy contracts the target tissue.

29. The device of claim 28, wherein the probe body comprises a thin flat structure, the treatment surface defining a major surface of the probe body.

30. The device of claim 29, wherein the probe body is semi-rigid or rigid.

31. A device for contracting a target tissue having a tissue surface, the device comprising:

a probe having a treatment surface oriented for engaging the tissue surface of the target tissue;

an electrode disposed on the treatment surface of the probe and engageable against the target tissue surface so as to contract the engaged target tissue from an initial size to a contracted size, the electrode comprising a peripheral portion and an interior portion, the interior portion having an area corresponding to the contracted size of the tissue, the peripheral portion being energizeable independently from the interior portion.

32. A probe for contracting a target tissue of a patient body, the probe comprising:

a probe body having a tissue engaging surface; and

an energy transmitting element disposed along the surface of the probe, the energy transmitting element capable of directing sufficient energy into the target tissue to shrink the target tissue, the energy transmitting element having a mechanism that limits transmitted energy so as to avoid ablation of the target tissue.

33. The probe of claim 32, wherein the limit mechanism comprises a thermal mass, the energy transmitting element comprising a heat transfer surface thermally coupled to the thermal mass, the thermal mass transferring a significant portion of the energy when the heat transfer surface cools from a safe tissue temperature toward body temperature.

34. The probe of claim 32, wherein the limit mechanism comprises a reaction mass that reacts to transfer the energy and which is depleted when the energy is transferred.

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